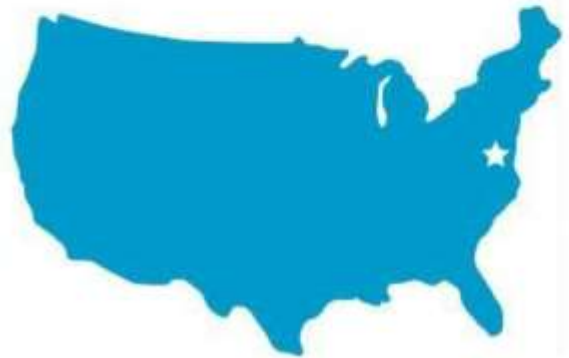


United Planet

National Profile

THE UNITED STATES



United States of America

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About United Planet

Joint Cooperation

United Planet is the U.S. North American member of the ICYE Federation, one of the longest running volunteer organizations in the world. As an international, Boston-based, 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to broadening mutual understanding, friendships, and peace among cultures; UP partnered with ICYE to re-establish ICYE's program in the United States and Canada in 2001 after the long-standing USA partner disbanded. United Planet has a mission to foster cross-cultural understanding while addressing our shared global challenges to unite the world in a community beyond borders.

UP is a sponsor with the State Department Exchange Visitor (J1 Visa) Program since 2014. As such, United Planet receives enthusiastic and committed exchangeees to participate in internships across the nation. United Planet works with other various government agencies and foundational grant partners to cultivate global communities of peace. Activities include online, virtual programs for volunteers, interns, and classrooms.

What We Do

As featured on CNN, United Planet provides a diverse and creative range of international, community-based, and online programs to achieve global understanding.

Initiated in 2000, United Planet was officially founded as a non-profit organization in the United States on September 19, 2001. United Planet has expanded its membership and volunteer base to encompass over 100 countries. The response to the quality and diversity of UP's programs has been favorable both in the US and abroad. All UP team members, including the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, are enthusiastic and passionate, and very excited to be working with you on this wonderful opportunity.

Follow Us

Stay up to date with all United Planet News & Communication @UnitedPlanet



About the United States of America

Climate

Due to the size of the United States, it is not possible to define one climate for the entire country. In general we have four seasons: fall, winter, spring and summer. The length of these periods varies according to region. The US is mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the Great Plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest. Low winter temperatures in the northwest are ameliorated occasionally in February and March by warm winds from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Massachusetts and New England States situated in the northern hemisphere colder months of the year are from November to March, while the warmer months last from April to October. We recommend you consult an online weather group such as www.weather.com or www.cnn.com for the most current and up to date weather alerts.

Geography and Citizenry

Location

North America: bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean and, resting between Canada and Mexico.

Area¹

Total | 9,629,091 sq km

Land | 9,158,960 sq km

Water | 470,131 sq km

The USA is known as the world's third-largest country. About one-half the size of Russia; three-tenths the size of Africa; one-half the size of South America (or slightly larger than Brazil); slightly larger than China; and, two and one-half times the size of Western Europe

Coastline

19,924 km

Terrain

There are vast central plains, mountains in the west, hills and low mountains in the east, rugged mountains and broad river valleys in Alaska and rugged and volcanic topography in Hawaii.

Elevation Extremes

Lowest point | Death Valley -86 m

Highest point | Mount McKinley 6,194 m

¹ Includes only the 50 states and District of Columbia

Natural Resources

Coal, Copper, Lead, Molybdenum, Phosphates, Uranium, Bauxite, Gold, Iron, Mercury, Nickel, Potash, Silver, Tungsten, Zinc, Petroleum, Natural Gas, Timber

Land Use

Arable Land: 19%

Permanent Crops: 0%

Permanent Pastures: 25%

Forests And Woodland: 30%

Other: 26% (1993 Est.)

Natural Hazards

There are tsunamis, volcanoes, and earthquake activity around the Pacific Basin; hurricanes along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts; tornadoes in the Midwest and Southeast; mudslides in California; forest fires in the West; flooding; and, permafrost in Northern Alaska, a major impediment to development.

Environmental Challenges

Air pollution resulting in acid rain in both the US and Canada; the US is the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels; water pollution from runoff of pesticides and fertilizers; very limited natural freshwater resources in much of the western part of the country require careful management; desertification

Population²

326,386,072

Persons in poverty 12.7%

Age/Gender Structure³

Persons under 5 to 19 years | 25.5%

Persons 20 to 64 years | 59.3%

Persons 65 years and over | 15.2%

96.9 Males per 100 Females

Ethnic Groups⁴

White 76.9%, Black/African American 13.3%, Asian 5.7%, American Indian and Alaska Native 1.3%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 0.2%, two or more races 2.6%, Hispanic or Latino 17.8%

Education

High school graduate or higher 87.0%

Bachelor's degree or higher 30.0%

² <https://www.census.gov/popclock/> (December 2017)

³ https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_1YR_S0101&prodType=table

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>

Health

Individuals living with a disability (under 65 years) 8.6%

Culture Aspects

Social Norms

North Americans are typically friendly and will often plan social visits for new acquaintances on short notice. Do not feel required to accept the invitation. If you are busy, politely decline and suggest an alternative way to spend time.

If a friend has invited you to “drop by anytime” to his or her home, office or school, always call ahead of time just to confirm. While there, try not to stay too long unless otherwise invited.

Invitations are normally given over the phone. If you are invited to someone’s home for dinner it is polite to bring a small gift as a gesture of your appreciation (though not required). Gifts such as a bottle of wine, candy, flowers, or small household items are all acceptable, but again not necessary. Many North Americans may invite you into their home and ask you to “make yourself at home.” This phrase is spoken to allow you to feel comfortable. You may receive a tour of the house and can be invited to “help yourself” to whatever you want. In general North Americans will extend open invitations to you as a guest, if you are unsure if something is appropriate just ask, North Americans generally are very friendly when responding to questions.

We encourage all of our exchangeees to take advantage of the unique opportunity to talk, meet and interact with Americans in various social settings.

You may find, while here in the USA, that social responses vary from your own home. In general, North Americans require more “personal space” than others. Possibly, if you come too close to a North American while in conversation, he or she may feel as if you are invading their space and will try to back away. Try to become aware of any reactions while talking to people and react accordingly. If while in conversation you find another person leaning back or taking a step back, instead of closing the gap, let her set the space and talk from a further distance apart.

Also, North Americans, in general, do not make a lot of physical contact when talking to strangers or acquaintances. Shake hands when you initially meet another person. Americans do not generally kiss or hug when greeting unless the two greeters are close friends.

Dress

In comparison with many other countries of the world, the USA regarding dress is very casual. Common attire for young adults will almost always include jeans, a cotton shirt, and

sandals or sneakers. In metropolitan areas, such as Chicago, New York, and Boston, fashion can be much more eclectic and trendy.

Religion⁵

Christian 70.6% (25.4% of which is Evangelical Protestant and 20.8% Catholic)

Jewish 1.9%, Buddhist 0.7%, Muslim 0.9%, Hindu 0.7%, Other 0.3%

Unaffiliated (including Atheist and Agnostic) 22.8%

The US is a secular state, which means that there is no official state religion. In addition, because the US is so multicultural, with large populations of immigrants from all over the world, it is also pluralistic. However, it can be surprising for visitors to learn how devotional the population of the US is in terms of religion.

In many states, especially those of the south and midwest, Christianity, and specifically Protestantism, can be an important social influencer. In metropolitan areas, religion will become less of a social factor. If you have a religious affiliation, you will most likely be able to find a strong and vibrant community that shares your convictions, and if not, you should not feel isolated or uncomfortable. Remembering to be polite and non-judgmental is the most important thing you can do.

Typical Spending

Prices in the United States are normally a lot higher in cities than in smaller towns, thus the great difference in price for the same product. Prices may also vary greatly from shop to shop. Below is a list of typical items and their average cost for an idea of what to expect to spend while abroad:

Item	Price⁶
U.S. Stamp within the 50 states	\$.49
Local one-way bus/subway ticket (Monthly)	\$1.75-\$2.75 (\$88)
Newspaper	\$1.50 (Sunday 2.00)
Basic lunch, including drink	\$14.00
2 liters of Coca-Cola	\$1.92
A 8 oz. coffee	\$1.00-\$4.50
Bread for 2 people for 1 day	\$2.15
3 Liters of laundry detergent	\$11

⁵ <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

⁶ <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/country/comparison/ecuador/united-states>

A month's rent for an apartment 480 sqft	\$1079
Cinema ticket	\$12
A pair of jeans	\$47
Train journeys: Boston – New York	\$65
Bus journey: Boston – New York	\$15
1 box of antibiotics	\$17
Box of sanitary pads	\$7
Deodorant	\$3.50
2-in-1 Shampoo and Conditioner	\$4.84
Toothpaste	\$1.78
Package of cigarettes	\$8.00
Hostel accommodation may include breakfast	\$25.00-\$65.00

Government⁷

The USA Federal Government is divided into three branches

Independence Day: July 4th, 1776 (July 4th is a national holiday)

Executive

The executive branch carries out and enforces laws. It included the President, executive departments, independent agencies, and other boards, commissions, and committees.

President Joseph “Joe” Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were inaugurated into office January 2021 and they will serve a 4-year-term.

Judicial

The judicial branch includes the federal courts and the organizations that support them.

Legislative

The legislative branch consists of Congress—the Senate and the House of Representatives—and agencies that support congress.

⁷ <https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>

Political Parties

Democratic, Republican, Libertarian and Other (including Green, Constitution &c.) are representative of the political views of North Americans.

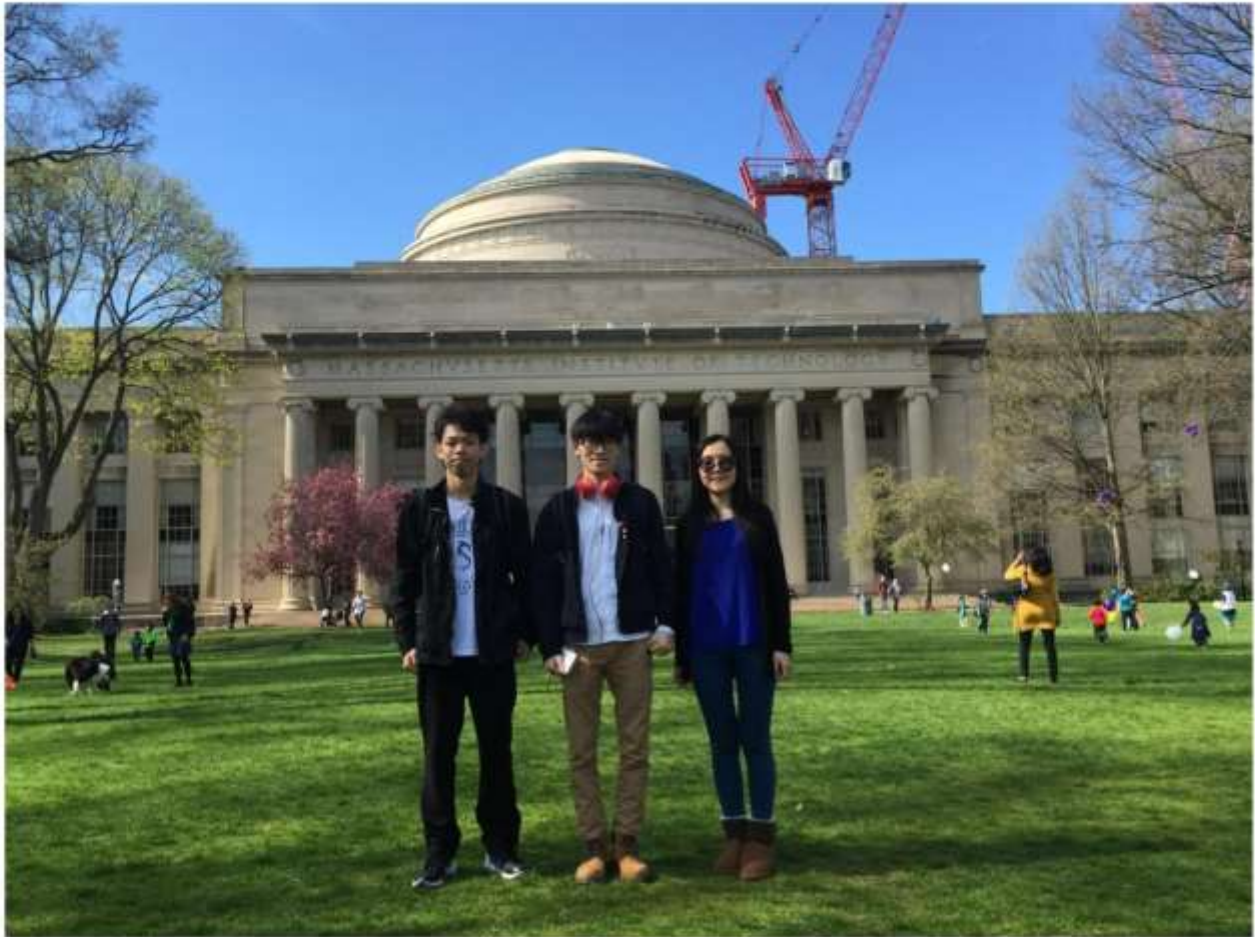
Language

English is the predominant language spoken by North Americans. Being fluent or near that, in the English language is very important in helping to integrate into this society. Fluency will enable you to communicate and form personal relationships with individuals at your placement, fellow volunteers, and those people you meet going about your day-to-day activities.

That being said, Americans will take great pleasure in helping you to perfect your English, especially when it comes to slang. If you hear someone speaking and use a word you don't know or understand, always ask to have it explained. The use of slang will be covered during the orientation.

With the increased number of immigrants from Latin American countries, Spanish is spoken in many areas of the USA as well. The USA is a country of immigrants and in larger cities you will hear languages (and dialects) spoken from all over the world.





Health & Safety

Here at United Planet, the health and safety of all of our exchangees is of the utmost importance. This is our promise to you:

- 1) All of our program sites and partners are vetted for safety. We will never place an exchangee in a location that is deemed unsafe for living or traveling. We monitor all of our program sites domestically and worldwide for any incidents or changes to location safety.
- 2) All of our staff are trained in how to respond to issues or needs and this training is renewed bi-annually. You will receive training on how to stay healthy and safe in your new home. You are invited to ask questions any time!
- 3) Even with a good program design and monitoring and safety training for staff and exchangees, things *may* still be challenging. We have a comprehensive emergency procedure plan with resources at our fingertips should we need to enact necessary measures. You have a system in 3 countries supporting you for a safe and successful program.

We will do all we can on our end to make this program as safe as possible for you. What we require of you is to do the same. Ultimately, your health and safety comes down to the decisions you make for yourself. We ask that you make good decisions that do not put you in unhealthy or dangerous circumstances. We are happy to discuss anything with you so that you are 100% confident in doing this.

Emergency Relocation/Evacuation Plan

In the unlikely event of an emergency relocation/evacuation stay calm, use common sense, and follow these steps:

- 1) Get to a safe location
- 2) Go to your host family or local accommodation if it is safe to do so. If an alternative location has been identified by your USA/United Planet coordinator, this will be explained in orientation.
- 3) The coordinator will meet you or call your host family/ accommodation, if possible and safe to do so. You may also call the UP Emergency number, given during orientation.
- 4) A plan will be made with the coordinator, Boston Office, appropriate embassies, travel insurance company, etc for relocation/evacuation.
- 5) If your host family or accommodation location is not safe to go to; volunteers should follow the lead of their host family and host community as well as announcements on the radio and television. The Boston Office may work with the U.S. Embassy, the Red Cross, and the local police in order to communicate messages via radio, television, individual messengers, and any other available method.
- 6) If you can not be in contact with the coordinator, you may call the 24/7 emergency assistance number for the insurance provider for advice; you are covered for natural disaster and political evacuation.
- 7) If you do not have access to phone communication, and can communicate via other means (ie email, Facebook, or other social media) you should post communication only when you are in a safe location. Getting to safety is always your first priority.

Upon Arrival

Upon arrival, you will receive an electronic I-94 form (duration of stay date). Please make sure that this date is valid for the duration of your stay: for six months or one year. If the immigration officer questions how long you will stay, please explain your situation and show the officer a copy of your I-94 invitation letter.

Rules and Regulations

Travel within the United States during your program is possible but, may require a DS-2019 authorization from your United Planet RO/ARO, for your safety please always notify United Planet of your travels in advance.

Exchangees known to be using illegal drugs or drinking alcohol if under the age of 21 will be expelled from the program.

The exchange lasts up to 12 months and after that time all exchangees must return to their home country. United Planet has no responsibility for exchangees failing to adhere to this rule.

Checklist

Please ensure that you have:

- A valid passport *

- Appropriate Entry Clearance / Visa

- 2 copies of entry documentation

- Correctly issued flight ticket and that your flights are confirmed*

- Have read all documentation - including this National Profile

- Emergency contact information

- Information about your home country: pictures, brochures, maps, books, coins, recipes, etc. are nice to share with your hosts

**Indicates the following forms must be copied and sent to UP*

Packing List (Optional Guide, Use Discretion)

- € Important: your carry-on should have a change of clothes, toiletries, passport, prescription medication and all important documents in case of lost baggage
- € Duffel bags rather than roll-on suitcases
- € Backpack
- € Sleeping bag *for travel*
- € Seasonal and appropriate clothes
 - Use this profile as a reference
- € One nice outfit for special occasions
- € Poncho, weatherproof jacket and/or umbrella
- € Comfortable, sturdy walking shoes
- € Sandals
- € Travel size toiletries for the first week (buy more if necessary, once in USA)
- € Useful electronics: adaptor, chargers, flashlight
- € Camera and journal
- € Medication: Prescriptions, Tylenol, etc., as needed
- € Small first-aid kit: safety pins, nail clippers, Band-Aids, sewing kit, etc.
- € Pictures and information from home to share with others
- € Music, clothes, calendar, CDs, games, postcards, jokes, books, movies, maps
 - Useful for your presentation during Orientation

Do not bring too much as you will be responsible, solely, for your own luggage.

Exchangees often arrive with a year's supply of toiletries – these are heavy and can be bought moderately cheaply in the US. Just bring what you need for the orientation and buy more when you get to your project.

Backpacks are easier to carry and more convenient to store than suitcases. If you bring a suitcase make sure that you can carry it comfortably. *Tip: pack your bag and then take out half of the stuff – you'll still have more than you need!*

